

Honorable members of the City Council, our distinguished guests, fellow citizens.

As we begin to write the next chapter in the life of our city we should pause and reflect on the collective efforts and many successes of the past, contemplate the challenges of tomorrow, and most importantly give thanks for the opportunity to help give shape and meaning to this community we love. Those of us who have been given the opportunity of public service are ever mindful of the responsibility which accompanies these opportunities, so when our work is done, we may hopefully pass on a legacy of good stewardship, to the next generations of Chula Vistans, to our children and grandchildren.

Chula Vista of course is for our citizens, whether new or old, more than a mere mailing address. Chula Vista is a place we call home. The idea of home carries meanings to us as diverse as our community. For some it means the place of our childhood and where we hope our children may put down roots, for others it is where you own a business, ply a trade, attend college or practice a profession. Regardless of our circumstance, or the length of our citizenship, Chula Vista is a community we value greatly.

It is valuable because of its rich history, it is valuable because of its involved, vibrant and diverse citizenry, and for the bright promise of its future.

As we contemplate the opportunities of our future, and seek to provide for our city and its citizens, we should remember that this community which we value and which we call home, is truly more than the sum of its physical parts, more than the materials that define its borders, shape its streets, or define its skyline. Home and community of course, go beyond the basic engineering and planning for civic infrastructure and facilities, beyond statistics about economic growth, net valuations, total park acreage ratios, or mathematical formulas on levels of service. A community, is truly defined by the collective character, identity and spirit of the people who reside within its boundaries.

While providing for transportation infrastructure, adequate public facilities and park space, and protecting the safety and welfare of our citizens should and will always be our continuing priorities, we can not forget that a sense of community identity, character and soul are what truly make a city great.

The years ahead will be times of change for our community. Our citizens and those of us who serve them will be constantly striving to balance physical and economic growth, with a desire to develop and keep a quality living experience for our residents. As we deal with the many questions which will be presented to us as we seek to solve problems, words like home and community should never be left out of the answers.

This time of change for Chula Vista could also be a time of renewal. We should seize opportunities in new planning and in redevelopment and revitalization of our older neighborhoods to shape a community where there is economic and social unity between our historic city and new communities and neighborhoods in the east. We must honestly face the fact that while our established city of residents maintain a strong sense of community history and identity, the fast growing population of new Chula Vistans do not share it. There is a frightening lack of geographic, economic and ultimately social connection between our established communities and our new ones. Of more concern to this new Mayor, is that many of our residents old and new, fail to see the need for any connection in the first place.

The key to successful community cohesion will also be one of our greatest challenges. While working to assure good public facilities and amenities in our newest areas, we must succeed in breathing new life into our historic downtown core. We must make the decision to provide our community a social as well as economic center which can draw our older and newer residents together, and strengthen our city's ability to compete for the time and dollars of even our own residents. I believe the heart of this city should be a revitalized downtown core.

This idea is not mere social idealism, or well intentioned but naive idea of city unity, as some more cynical than I have suggested. It is a very real concern for our city as we change and grow, one which presents economic as well as social impacts for the future of our city. Chula Vista is not nor will it ever be of such great size so as to render any hope of community identity irrelevant. Many a growing community in California have lost all sense of identity, sense of place are less competitive or desirable communities because as they changed they failed to renew.

Chula Vista is not as well a city of such small size as to offer only housing and a service economy as the bedroom community it once was. With both

feet out of our infancy, Chula Vista now stands on the doorstep of its own coming of age. While we progress toward being a complete and vibrant city in our own right, striving to offer a competitive place for economic investment, industry and high-paying jobs, we can still afford to offer a well nourished sense of community cohesion and identity as an asset, one which can afford us a competitive edge.

This opportunity for renewal amidst the challenges and change we face is one which we are fortunate to have. It is the result of a legacy of good leadership and strong vision. Chula Vista is a city which possesses many of the ingredients for great success:

We benefit from an involved citizens giving countless hours of their time, participating in the life of their community at a level unmatched in San Diego County. We are located on the Pacific Rim and near the International Border with its abundant economic opportunities. Our landscape is rich in unique history and resources. We are home to one of the largest areas of underutilized bayfront property in California, with potential for environmental preservation as well as recreational, entertainment, educational and commercial development. This asset if properly managed,

could help change the image of our city's older neighborhoods, spur new investment and breathe life into areas of our community most in need of our attention.

As we work to take full advantage of our city's potential we should not be afraid to embrace change. We should welcome every opportunity to learn and to embrace creativity, to approach problems and opportunities in new ways. We should take responsibility for our many successes, as well as areas where we must improve. My friends, neither I nor my council colleagues have all the answers to our communities needs. Nor do the countless professional staff who work daily for our community. While striving to serve you well, we will of course make mistakes, and hope to learn from them.

Our newer communities have grown at a rate which has outpaced our ability to provide needed infrastructure to support it, and we must be willing to explore new ways to finance and implement needed facilities in advance of our growth.

We must assume more responsibility and leadership on regional issues. We should reach out as a city and lead and not just participate in addressing regional needs and solutions to meet them. As a diverse community in our bi-national region we will reach out and seek to build better relationships with our counterparts in Mexico. Regional economic challenges, air and water quality know no political borders.

While a great foundation has been laid by community leaders who have preceded us, there is always work to be done, and ways to do it better. We will seek to provide for greater community outreach and participation so the product of our work is the best it can be. While as a community we will never all agree, we will work openly and strive for consensus, the example being set by our City Council.

I have said we are left a legacy of strong and stable leadership, from Greg Cox to Gayle McCandliss, Tim Nader and Shirley Horton. My predecessor Mayor Horton led our city well, with compassion, fairness and class. Her unassuming demeanor betrayed an iron will and strong vision. It has been an honor to serve with her, and we wish her well as she even at this moment takes up new responsibilities as a member of the State Assembly.

As I begin my journey of service as your new Mayor, I am grateful not just for the confidence so many of you have placed in me, but for the outstanding colleagues and city staff with whom it will be my honor to serve.

Councilwoman Patty Davis is a strong, creative leader whose actions refreshingly speak as strongly as her convictions and her words. She is a leader always seeking solutions with a “can do” attitude. Councilwoman Davis has a heart of compassion and a steel determination and dedication to her principles. Her leadership bringing innovative programs to help those most in need is true to her character and admired by many. She is consensus builder who above all, I am proud to call my dear friend.

Councilman Jerry Rindone is the dean of our council, and his friendship and advice I have had the benefit of for more than eight years. His generational knowledge of our community is unrivaled. He is one of a family of distinguished public servants, and a leader to whom others look for problem solving. It is frequently Councilman Rindone who provides a structure for a solution when it seems all room for compromise is lost. I am honored to serve again with Jerry Rindone.



Councilman John McCann is precisely the kind of principled and intelligent community leader to whom I am proud to relinquish my seat on the City Council. Councilman McCann has a keen mind and kind heart, and is one of the truly most decent individuals I have ever met. He brings a strong background in economics and business from which the city will benefit, and a strong sense of community responsibility. A fellow Bonita Vista grad, he is a good friend. I am excited about serving together, John.

My longtime colleague and companion on the campaign trail these last eighteen months is a valued and talented member of our council.

Councilwoman Mary Salas has a spirit, drive and love of our community which is infectious. She brings creative ideas and critical thinking upon which we will all rely and benefit. I can tell you from experience she is a tenacious advocate. I extend my congratulations for a hard fought effort, and I extend my hand to Councilwoman Salas in service to the city we both love very much.

As I look out on this courtyard, I see the young faces of our future, seated next to the many leaders and citizens who have worked to bring us the opportunities of today. As I said just over one year ago:

I am optimistic about what lies on our horizon, and I am determined to help ensure our civic ship sails a safe and wise path to it. Let's walk and work that path together and guide our city to a bright and promising future.

Thank You. God Bless You. Have a great afternoon.